

## **The Dysfunctional Library Board**

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If some board members become hostile and disruptive to the library organization, board meetings can become little petty fiefdoms, a bizarre world where nothing makes sense and nothing gets accomplished. Furthermore, the library mission statement is ignored or disrupted to serve the agenda of the immature personalities that make up the bully persona of one or more members.

These individuals feel insecure about themselves and their hostility towards their lives is manifested into their board involvement in the same way a child will throw a tantrum or will not behave in a manner his or her parent wished.

Bullies rarely act alone without the support of their minions. This group behavior mentality has a snowballing effect. An extreme analogy of this behavior can be seen in the fact that one person rarely starts a riot on their own. It's not until others are involved before some steps over the line and acts in a manner individuals would rarely initiate on their own.

The truth of a situation never matters to the disruptive members because to them it the act of the destruction that is the only important factor. Reasoning with irrational members rarely works because reason is something they lack in the first place.

These unprofessional members want to believe anything that helps them further their agenda and they believe anything and don't care if it's true or where disinformation come from. This inductive assumption of reasoning is known as "source amnesia", which is defined by Wikipedia as: "the inability to remember where, when or how previously learned information has been acquired, while retaining the factual knowledge." They just know it's true because they heard it somewhere and want to believe it.

For city councils and mayors, who resist getting involved in a dysfunctional library board even if they know it is a problem. Sometimes they foster this problem, due to their own ignorance, lack of morals or because of nepotism, which is defined by Wikipedia as "the practice among those with power or influence of favoring relatives or friends." Other city officials want to do the right thing but do not want to "*rock the boat*." It's been said the smaller the town, the worse the politics.

*Critical mass* is a term is borrowed from nuclear physics which refers to the amount of a substance needed to start a chain reaction. In referring this to social dynamics in the form of a dysfunctional library board, this chain reaction destroys (explodes) the social factors of control and communications.

Solutions? Because of all the social variables are in play this is not an easy fix, in part because many Americans are not taught how to critically think. This is more of a qualitative observation than a judgement statement. In our attention-deficit-society the bully culture can not only be seen in the TV entertainment in the form of these so-called "reality show". Many Americans believe

the way to solve problems and conflicts is to attack someone verbally in the form of “character assassination,” leaving the real truth of an argument, marginalized or totally ignored.

One possible solution is for critical thinkers in these board and city councils who know something is wrong to come out of their timidity and assert themselves. They must dislike the disruptive behavior of board members more than they fear the possible retaliation of their challenges.

Other solutions will need further in-depth research from university studies and state libraries. More extreme solutions might have to come from the legal arena, which can muddle up any reasonable compromise, even if that is a viable option. Many of these disruptive individuals can't compromise, but possible legal threats might be the only thing that will make them back down.

*“Most communities identify ‘straight talk,’ of creating an environment where people do not avoid conflict but speak honestly to one another, as one of the core values of a healthy community. Straight talk is countercultural in a world that prefers politeness to honest.” **Martin Luther King JR***

**About the Author:**

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